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**Reduction of illicit demand for drugs: Action Plan for
the Implementation of the Declaration on the Guiding Principles
of Drug Demand Reduction**

**Follow-up to the Action Plan for the Implementation of the
Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand
Reduction****Report of the Executive Director***Summary*

In the present report on the follow-up to the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction, prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolution 54/132, the role of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme in supporting Governments in the implementation process is reviewed, and the Commission on Narcotic Drugs is called upon to provide guidance to the follow-up activities.

Contents

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
I. Introduction	1-4	2
II. Role of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme	5-11	2
III. Activities initiated by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme	12-32	3
IV. Conclusion	33-38	7

* E/CN.7/2000/1.

I. Introduction

1. In its resolution 54/132, the General Assembly adopted the Action Plan for the Implementation of the Guiding Principles on Drug Demand Reduction and urged all Member States to implement the Action Plan in their respective national, regional and international actions, and to strengthen their national efforts to fight the abuse of illicit drugs among their population, particularly among children and youth. In that resolution, the Assembly requested the Executive Director of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme (UNDCP) to report to the Commission on Narcotic Drugs at its forty-third session on the follow-up to the Action Plan. The present report of the Executive Director has been prepared in response to that request.

2. In the Political Declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session (resolution S-20/2, annex), Member States recognized the importance of demand reduction as an indispensable pillar in countering the world drug problem. Through the Political Declaration, Member States committed themselves to:

(a) Introducing into their national programmes and strategies the provisions set out in the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction, also adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session;

(b) Establishing the year 2003 as a target date for having in place new or enhanced demand reduction strategies and programmes, in close collaboration with public health, social welfare and law enforcement authorities;

(c) Achieving significant and measurable results in the field of demand reduction by the year 2008;

(d) Working closely with UNDCP to develop action-oriented strategies to assist in the implementation of the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction.

3. At its forty-second session, the Commission adopted resolution 42/4 entitled "Guidelines for reporting by Governments on the implementation of the Global Programme of Action and on the progress achieved in meeting the goals and targets for the years 2003 and 2008, as set out in the Political Declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session". Pursuant to that resolution, the Commission established an inter-sessional working group to elaborate guidelines to facilitate reporting by Governments. At its reconvened forty-second

session, the Commission adopted resolution 42/11, entitled "Guidelines for reporting on the follow-up to the twentieth special session of the General Assembly". The Commission also approved the questionnaire for reporting on the action plans and measures adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session, annexed to resolution 42/11, on the understanding that the questionnaire would be streamlined during the reporting period.

4. The first biennial report would be examined by the Commission at its regular session in the year 2001, in compliance with the new mandate that the Assembly has given to the Commission. In paragraph 20 of the Political Declaration, the Assembly called upon all States to report biennially to the Commission on their efforts to meet the goals and targets for the years 2003 and 2008, agreed upon at the twentieth special session, and requested the Commission to analyse those reports in order to enhance the cooperative effort to combat the world drug problem.

II. Role of the United Nations International Drug Control Programme

5. The Action Plan is offered as guidance to Member States in implementing the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction and in meeting the objectives of the twentieth special session of the General Assembly. In addition to describing objectives and national actions that could be taken to reach the objectives, it also outlines outputs to be delivered and the expected impact of the actions.

6. The Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction advocates that responses to drug abuse should be based on a regular assessment of the drug problem. Those responses should also build on knowledge acquired from research as well as lessons derived from past programmes, so-called best practice. It is primarily in those two areas that UNDCP should concentrate its efforts to advise and assist Member States in their implementation of the Declaration.

7. The Action Plan provides for two principal ways for UNDCP and other relevant international and regional organizations to assist Member States in their efforts to achieve the objectives of the Action Plan. First, it entrusts UNDCP with the task of providing guidance and assistance to those requesting it for the development, by the

year 2003, of demand reduction strategies and programmes fully incorporating the principles of the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction (objective 3). Those strategies and programmes should cover the whole spectrum of demand reduction, from primary prevention to the reduction of the negative health and social consequences of drug abuse. They should also be carried out in a wide variety of settings and be implemented in collaboration with relevant sectors of society. In addition, advice and technical assistance should be provided on the establishment of national systems for monitoring the drug abuse problem, including regionally and internationally recognized core indicators (objective 4).

8. Secondly, the Action Plan entails a role for UNDCP and other relevant international and regional organizations with respect to best practice. A number of areas have been identified, in which UNDCP is asked to facilitate the sharing of information on best strategies. The areas include the following: how to provide prevention, education, treatment and rehabilitation services to offenders who misuse drugs (objective 10); how to undertake appropriately targeted public information campaigns (objective 11); how to develop effective and culturally appropriate information campaigns to help drug users and inform them about available services (objective 12); how to develop training strategies for social mediators (objective 13); and how to design and implement training of human resources in demand reduction (objective 14). Sharing of information on best strategies is also called for in more general areas, such as the development of programmes for reducing illicit drug demand in a wide variety of health and social contexts (objective 6) and the promotion of networking (objective 7).

9. In addition to the two principal tasks—to provide guidance and assistance to those requesting it and to facilitate the sharing of best strategies—the Action Plan also highlights the advocacy role of UNDCP with regard to research, suggesting that the development of methodologies for assessing the cost and consequences of drug abuse and for undertaking cost-benefit analysis should be promoted (objective 4). UNDCP and other relevant international and regional organizations should also encourage research into a wide range of issues related to drug demand reduction (objective 5).

10. A similar advocacy role is to be undertaken in the development of guidelines for demand reduction programmes and services so as to enhance their quality and

relevance (objective 8) and in promoting the participation of target groups in the design of projects (objective 9).

11. Finally, the Action Plan sets a number of specific additional tasks for UNDCP and other relevant international and regional organizations. Those tasks include action to facilitate the following: the creation of an international youth network for the sharing of information and mutual learning (objective 9); the development of guidelines on curricula and training programmes; and the intercountry exchange of experts for training purposes (objective 14). Another specific task is to establish coordination mechanisms for identification, sharing and expansion of best practice (objective 15), and to participate in the creation of an international mechanism by facilitating networking and linkages between databases (objective 16).

III. Activities initiated by the United Nations International Drug Control Programme

12. One of the principal tasks of UNDCP in supporting implementation of the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction is to provide guidance and assistance to Member States, at their request. The main task is to make sure that countries have programmes that are comprehensive and guided by the principles of the Declaration. As the Action Plan covers all areas of demand reduction, although without the same level of detail in all areas, only some examples of such assistance will be given in the present report. The examples relate to those objectives of the Action Plan that specifically call for UNDCP assistance and guidance to individual countries. Some examples of assistance required by the Action Plan and of activities related mainly to facilitating the sharing of experiences are discussed below.

13. To assess the quality and relevance of the advice and assistance provided by UNDCP at the country level and to accelerate the development of national demand reduction strategies and programmes in compliance with the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction, UNDCP convened a seminar in Vienna, held from 22 to 26 November 1999, involving the participation of representatives from UNDCP field offices responsible for demand reduction programmes. The aims of the seminar were to arrive at a common understanding of the political framework and background against which

demand reduction activities need to be developed, implemented and evaluated, and to develop culturally appropriate approaches to support the implementation of the Declaration.

14. Under objective 1 (applying the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction in order to achieve significant and measurable results in reducing demand for drugs by the year 2008 and preparing a biennial report to the Commission on those results), UNDCP has supported the work of Member States in drawing up a questionnaire that will enable Governments to report on the follow-up to the action plans and measures adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session. The questionnaire will be one of the key instruments that will enable the Commission to monitor progress towards achieving the objectives set out in the Political Declaration adopted at the special session.

15. Objective 2 (securing a long-term commitment to the implementation of a national strategy for reducing illicit demand and ensuring full coordination and participation of the relevant authorities and sectors of society) and objective 3 (developing and implementing, by the year 2003, national strategies fully incorporating the guiding principles set out in the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction) are broad objectives for the achievement of which UNDCP has been providing assistance for some time. That includes assistance in the establishment of effective mechanisms for drug control and in the coordination of various sectors of society. At the same time, assistance is being provided to States in drawing up comprehensive demand reduction strategies. In that process, the previous experience of UNDCP in designing master plans and in setting up drug control secretariats and committees in various countries has proven useful.

16. In fulfilment of the tasks entrusted to UNDCP under objective 4 of the Action Plan (assessing the causes and consequences of the misuse of substances and establishing a national system to monitor drug problems and trends), UNDCP has launched a programme to assist countries in the establishment of national systems for monitoring the drug abuse problem. The global programme for assessing the magnitude of drug abuse aims at building up the capacity of States to collect high-quality data on illicit drug demand, including data on the following: the annual prevalence of drug abuse among the general population; lifetime prevalence among youth; and the extent of problems related to drug abuse, such as addiction, injection practices, increased mortality and the risk of infection with the

human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and of other infections. The global programme consists of eight regional projects, technically supported through a global project. It has been configured as a regional development initiative, designed to work in partnership with national and regional epidemiology networks and with international organizations. The pace at which the assistance will be delivered is, however, contingent upon the availability of extra-budgetary funds.

17. According to objective 4 of the Action Plan, advice and assistance for the establishment of national systems for monitoring the drug abuse problem should include regionally and internationally recognized core indicators. With a view to ensuring that data sets are compatible, the global programme for assessing the magnitude of drug abuse will seek consensus with other relevant organizations, such as the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission of the Organization of American States and the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, on common sets of indicators, definitions and measures. To that end, in addition to ongoing regular consultations, a meeting has been organized to seek consensus and build partnerships.

18. In addition to the provision of assistance within the framework of the global programme, UNDCP has published guidelines for the development and implementation of drug abuse rapid situation assessments and responses.¹ The guidelines, which are available in all official languages of the United Nations, have been field-tested in all regions of the world.

19. Apart from establishing the methodological framework for measuring drug abuse, UNDCP has provided assistance to countries and territories that wanted to carry out research in that area. Rapid situation assessments have been planned or are being undertaken in various countries and territories (for example, in Croatia, Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Israel, Jordan, Pakistan and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, as well as in the region of east Africa and in the territories of the Palestinian Authority), and in some others (such as the parties to the memorandum of understanding signed by States of the Common Market of the Southern Cone), nationwide surveys to monitor drug abuse patterns and trends have been undertaken.

20. With regard to objective 6 (identifying and developing programmes for reducing illicit drug demand in a wide variety of health and social contexts), UNDCP advocates making demand reduction programmes sensitive

to local needs and priorities. It is thus essential to ensure that the design of programmes takes place close to where they are to be implemented. To make the development of demand reduction responses less dependent on international experts in the long run, UNDCP plans to broaden its expert base for demand reduction activities. In a pilot exercise for a limited number of countries, advisory panels of local experts will be created to support the provision of technical assistance by the field offices. Experts, practitioners and academics in the field of epidemiology, prevention and treatment and rehabilitation will be invited to serve on the panels in their personal capacity. To provide technical updates on particular areas of work for the panels, seminars will be organized, on a regular basis, by UNDCP or by international experts. If the pilot exercise proves successful, the establishment of local advisory panels will be extended to more countries.

21. UNDCP has a long tradition of working with other agencies of the United Nations to insert drug demand reduction activities into broader social programmes and the promotion of health at the country level. The Subcommittee on Drug Control of the Administrative Committee on Coordination has continued its work on the development of action plans in selected countries to provide a basis for coordinated inter-agency support to national implementation of the outcome of the twentieth special session of the General Assembly. The countries targeted include Afghanistan, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Mauritius, Myanmar, Nigeria, Pakistan, Peru, the Russian Federation, South Africa, Thailand, Turkey, Ukraine, Uzbekistan and Viet Nam. In addition, UNDCP has ensured that drug issues will be considered within the context of the Common Country Assessment and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework.

22. Various new inter-agency initiatives were undertaken as a follow-up to the twentieth special session of the General Assembly. Community-wide demand reduction projects were initiated in India in collaboration with the International Labour Organization and other United Nations agencies. In Nicaragua, UNDCP and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) started a needs assessment study to improve the delivery of drug abuse prevention programmes to children. A programme for the promotion of health and for drug abuse preventive education in schools was initiated by UNDCP, UNICEF and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) in Bolivia.

23. The HIV epidemic has forced various sectors of society to cooperate closely in preventing the spread of the virus. Injecting drug abuse is the main, or a major, mode of transmission for HIV infection in an increasing number of countries. In 1999, UNDCP joined the Joint and Co-sponsored United Nations Programme on Human Immunodeficiency Virus/Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome as its seventh co-sponsor. Together with the United Nations Development Programme, UNICEF, UNFPA, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank, UNDCP is ensuring that the prevention of HIV and AIDS goes hand in hand with the prevention and treatment of drug abuse. Brazil and Viet Nam are examples of countries in which UNDCP is involved in successful comprehensive programmes for the prevention of HIV linked to drug abuse. Determined investments in comprehensive demand reduction programmes are required in some countries of eastern Europe and in the Russian Federation, Ukraine and some States of central Asia, where there is a potentially explosive situation with regard to developments in drug injecting and HIV infections.

24. With regard to objective 14 (training in demand reduction for governmental agencies, non-governmental organizations etc.), UNDCP initiated various regional programmes, for example, for parties to the memorandum of understanding signed by States of Central America and to that signed by States of the Common Market of the Southern Cone. Also, the UNDCP/WHO Global Initiative on Primary Prevention of Substance Abuse has launched activities in eastern Europe, south-east Asia and southern Africa for the mobilization of all important actors in community life to prevent substance abuse among young people. The Initiative includes training in local assessments, prevention approaches and self-evaluation. The activities will also promote networking at the national and regional level. Yet another example of UNDCP support for training is a regional project in the Baltic States to develop school curricula and educational materials as well as training of future teachers.

25. Both the Political Declaration adopted by the Assembly at its twentieth special session and the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction highlight the importance of investing in and working with youth. Drug abuse prevention activities directed at young people are common in many countries, but need strengthening with regard to both the participation of young people and the relevance of various responses to new trends in drug taking.

26. On the basis of information provided by Governments through the annual reports questionnaire, it can be concluded that more needs to be done to reach out to the marginalized and vulnerable youth for whom drug abuse is a coping strategy. At the same time, it seems equally critical to reach out to those socially integrated young people, particularly in developed countries, for whom drug taking is seen as a lifestyle issue. While drug taking has been part of particular intellectual and artistic subcultures in the western world since the late nineteenth century, it now appears to be growing into a much more widespread cultural phenomenon, at least in some developed countries where more and more young people are exposed to a culture that appears to be more tolerant towards the use of drugs. New ways of reaching out to those young people for whom drug use is part of a particular lifestyle must therefore be developed, with input from the young people themselves.

27. Meeting the basic needs and protecting the rights of particularly vulnerable and disadvantaged children and young people is obviously very different from addressing the abuse of drugs as a cultural issue. In both cases, however, it is vital to involve the young people in the development of programmes and activities. In recent years, UNDCP and UNICEF, together with other United Nations agencies and non-governmental organizations, have been supporting efforts by States to better meet the needs and protect the rights of particularly disadvantaged adolescents. In that process, it has been vital to facilitate the participation of the adolescents concerned. Key elements for programme guidance, based on lessons learned and country examples, will be identified with regard to situation assessment and analysis, development of strategies for meeting the needs and protecting the rights of adolescents in crisis and promotion of their participation in the process. A collection of examples of best practice will be published in due course.

28. On the basis of experience gained in organizing the Youth Vision Jeunesse, Drug Abuse Prevention Forum, for youth and by youth, held in Banff, Canada, in April 1998, UNDCP will publish a handbook for drug abuse prevention among youth. The handbook is being developed with input from the various groups, representing 24 countries around the world, that participated in the Banff event. The same groups form the nexus of a global youth network for drug abuse prevention. UNDCP is facilitating the establishment of the network by providing communication tools and training opportunities, with the ultimate aim of empowering youth to develop innovative responses to the

challenges that they face and to take action in their own communities. The network will also serve to identify best practice and to share the experiences of different countries and regions. Such activities of UNDCP respond to the need "to facilitate the creation of an international network promoting regular contact among youth involved in demand reduction activities and allowing them to stay informed and learn from each other" (objective 9 of the Action Plan).

29. The Action Plan not only invites UNDCP to provide assistance to countries requesting it, but also entails an important role for UNDCP and other relevant international and regional organizations with respect to best practice. As mentioned in paragraph 8 of the present document, a number of areas have been identified, in which UNDCP is asked to facilitate the sharing of information on best strategies.

30. Most of the evaluations of prevention and treatment programmes have been carried out in developed countries. While the results of such evaluations may only seldom be of direct relevance to developing countries, they nevertheless contain valuable conclusion regarding what works and in which circumstances. Much work remains to be done, however, to identify examples of best strategies that are relevant also to countries with limited financial resources and different sociocultural conditions.

31. The guidelines contained in the publication entitled *Drug Abuse Rapid Situation Assessments and Responses* are based on work done by UNDCP to identify best practice and best strategies. The handbook for drug abuse prevention among youth will be another example of how UNDCP can contribute to the sharing of best strategies. A further publication in the pipeline, described in paragraph 27, above, deals with the key elements for programme guidance, and is to be published jointly with UNICEF and other United Nations organizations.

32. UNDCP has also started work on best strategies for providing prevention, education, treatment or rehabilitation services to offenders who misuse drugs (objective 10). An expert working group on improving the inter-sectoral impact in casework involving drug abuse offenders met in Vienna from 6 to 10 December 1999. The working group reviewed the collective experience and impact of treatment and rehabilitation programmes for drug-abusing offenders involving an active role for the courts, and identified core factors underlying the effectiveness of different initiatives. Practical guidelines for best strategies, based on the outcome of the meeting, were to be published

in early 2000. In addition, under another project, guidelines will be developed for community-based prevention, based on the experience of UNDCP in initiating such activities in various sociocultural settings in developing countries (objective 6).

IV. Conclusion

33. Few Governments have comprehensive demand reduction strategies and programmes in place, and many countries lack the capacity to systematically collect and analyse data and information regarding their drug abuse situation. That constitutes a serious constraint for the development of adequate responses to the drug abuse problem, since such responses need to build on a sound knowledge base in order to be effective.

34. In the Political Declaration adopted by the General Assembly at its twentieth special session, Member States committed themselves to achieving significant and measurable results in the field of demand reduction by the year 2008. Reporting on such achievements would require some kind of baseline data against which to measure the effectiveness and impact of the action taken. Many countries currently lack such data.

35. The present report contains an assessment of how UNDCP could support the implementation by Member States of the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction. Two principal roles for UNDCP have been identified, as follows:

(a) To provide guidance and assistance, to those requesting it, for the establishment of national information systems, and for the development of demand reduction strategies and programmes in line with the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction;

(b) To facilitate the sharing of information on best strategies in a number of areas.

36. UNDCP already performs the role outlined above in paragraph 35 (a). Since it does so mainly through technical assistance projects, the volume of work is dependent on the availability of extrabudgetary contributions. Such contributions are crucial for the success of the global programme for assessing the magnitude of drug abuse.

37. With regard to the sharing of information on best strategies, UNDCP has taken some initiatives, funded mainly by extrabudgetary contributions. Those initiatives include the development of practical guidelines for treat-

ment and rehabilitation programmes for drug-abusing offenders, and of guidelines for community-based prevention. Much more needs to be done, however, to facilitate the development and dissemination of such guidelines on best strategies. It is also important to ensure that demand reduction, a mandated priority sector in drug control, is funded from the regular budget. It should not be dependent on voluntary contributions which are essentially earmarked for specific countries and regions.

38. In view of the foregoing, the Commission may wish to indicate how best to ensure the provision of assistance to enable UNDCP to fulfil the tasks entrusted to it. The options include the following:

(a) Continuing to provide assistance using the limited existing resources from the regular budget, while trying to raise extrabudgetary resources;

(b) Requesting the inclusion, under the regular budget of the United Nations, of services for the identification, sharing and promotion of best strategies for the implementation of the Declaration on the Guiding Principles of Drug Demand Reduction.

Notes

- ¹ *Drug Abuse Rapid Situation Assessments and Responses* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.99.XI.12).